

Towards a Better Childhood

Changes in Value Orientation for Sustainable Consumption

An innovative Research Showcase event to:

- Develop awareness, policy, and advocacy
- Promote networking
- Build inter-disciplinary research

Thursday, January 16th 2014
16.00-19.00

Jubilee Lecture Theatre
University of Sussex
Brighton, UK

R.S.V.P. to consumercultureproject@sussex.ac.uk by 16th December, 2013
www.sussex.ac.uk/psychology/consumercultureproject/index



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The Leverhulme Trust



Event Synopsis

We live in a world where consumerism and a 'throw-away' mentality are growing, while planetary resources are dangerously depleting. Moreover, consumers of fashionable brands, the latest gadgets, and the coolest looks are getting ever younger. Thus, the powerful impact of consumer culture on children needs addressing, if we want to support their well-being. We showcase evidence that calls on us empower children to become critical and mindful consumers, and we debate possible policy and educational interventions to

- ★ **enhance** children's social and psychological well-being
- ★ **encourage** values likely to support sustainable consumption lifestyles and behaviours
- ★ **enable** a physical and cultural environment that is conducive to a better childhood

Does a consumerist orientation impact children's well-being?

The Children's Consumer Culture Project at the University of Sussex, led by psychologists Helga Dittmar and Robin Banerjee, has involved three years of work with over 2,000 children to investigate how materialist and appearance-focused values – so strongly promoted by British and global consumer culture – develop in childhood.

This project, and related research carried out by our team, appears to suggest that a consumerist orientation

- ★ is linked to children believing (erroneously) that 'you are liked more if you have cool things and look good'
- ★ is linked to lower social and personal well-being
- ★ undermines children's learning and school performance
- ★ leads children to become more rejected by their peers, more depressed, and more insecure over time
- ★ is linked to a greater 'carbon footprint' and less environmentally friendly values and behaviours in adults

We present a **Research Synopsis** of the main findings.

Can a less consumerist orientation in children help to support sustainable consumption?

Not only is a consumerist orientation in children linked to their social and personal well-being, it is also likely to be related to a strong desire to consume more and more, and faster and faster. This is likely to encourage the over-consumption and throw-away mentality increasingly questioned by parents, teachers, educational policy-makers, environmentalists, clinical and health practitioners, economists, as well as diverse and growing campaigns for a more sustainable and healthy cultural and physical environment.

Thus, early intervention seems necessary if we want to support and enhance children's well-being, make them aware of the consequences of an overly consumerist value orientation, and work towards educating them to become adults who respect the environment and adopt sustainable consumer lifestyles and behaviours.

We are delighted to host a **Multi-disciplinary Panel Discussion** with leading academics, policy-makers, and campaigners which addresses this crucial question.

Panel Discussion (confirmed participants)

Changes in Value Orientation for Sustainable Consumption

	<p>Richard Wilkinson Professor Emeritus of Social Epidemiology University of Nottingham</p>	<p>Social Epidemiologist Author of 'The Spirit Level' (with Kate Pickett)</p>		<p>http://www.ted.com/talks/richard_wilkinson.html http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/ http://www.yorkfairnesscommission.org.uk/richardwilkinsonandkatepickett.html</p>
	<p>Saamah Abdallah Senior Researcher New Economics Foundation London</p>	<p>Well-Being, Pro-environmental Behaviour and Value Change, Sustainable Economy</p>		<p>http://www.neweconomics.org/people/entry/saamah-abdallah http://www.happyplanetindex.org http://www.brainpoolproject.eu</p>
	<p>Jonathan Chapman Professor of Sustainable Design University of Brighton</p>	<p>Art, Design, & Media Author of 'Emotionally Durable Design'</p>		<p>http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/staff/jonathan-chapman http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZCI7EE_KAS http://www.makingitmagazine.net/?p=6906</p>
	<p>David Buckingham Professor of Media and Communications University of Loughborough Norwegian Centre for Child Research</p>	<p>Education & Sociology Author of 'The Material Child'</p>		<p>http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/socialsciences/staff/academicandresearch/david-buckingham.html http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/dec/15/children-marketplace-commerce-obesity-sexualisation http://www.ntnu.edu/noseb/research/projects</p>
	<p>Lorraine Whitmarsh Senior Lecturer in Psychology University of Cardiff Coordinator Tyndall Centre of Climate Change Research</p>	<p>Social Psychology of Risk, Environment, and Sustainability Project Report for DEFRA at http://orca.cf.ac.uk/48144/</p>		<p>http://psych.cf.ac.uk/contactsandpeople/academics/whitmarsh.php http://www.theguardian.com/climate-change-and-you/video/professor-lorraine-whitmarsh http://www.tyndall.ac.uk http://www.cynnalcymru.com</p>

Panel Discussion (confirmed participants)

Changes in Value Orientation for Sustainable Consumption

	<p>Andy Stirling Professor of Science and Technology Policy (SPRU, Sussex Energy Group, BMEC) University of Sussex</p>	<p>Author of 'From Sustainability, through Diversity to Transformation' (forthcoming)</p>	<p>http://www.sussex.ac.uk/spru/people/peoplelists/person/7513 http://www.sustainablelifestyles.ac.uk/team/andy-stirling http://www.slideshare.net/Stepscentre/</p>
	<p>Eleanor Miles Lecturer in Psychology University of Sussex</p>	<p>Social, Health, and Applied Psychology, Self-Regulation and Behaviour Change</p>	<p>http://www.sussex.ac.uk/psychology/people/peoplelists/person/316092</p>
	<p>Agnes Nairn Professor of Marketing, EM-Lyon Business School, Visiting Professor at University of Bath</p>	<p>Marketing, Advertising, Media Influences Author of 'Consumer Kids' (with Ed Mayo)</p>	 <p>http://www.agnesnairn.co.uk http://www.agnesnairn.co.uk/tedx.php http://www.agnesnairn.co.uk/policy_reports/advergames-its-not-childs-play.pdf http://www.agnesnairn.co.uk/policy_reports/child-well-being-report.pdf</p>
	<p>Helga Dittmar Reader in Psychology University of Sussex, Centre of Appearance Research Steering Committee</p>	<p>Social, Health, & Applied Psychology Author of 'Consumer Culture, Identity and Well-being'</p>	 <p>http://www.sussex.ac.uk/profiles/725 http://www.esrc.ac.uk/search/search-page.aspx?q=%3A*&topic_theme=Lifestyle&current_page=1&items_per_page=10&sort_order=publication_date&filters=on&author=Helga%20Dittmar&tab=outputs http://www.thepsychologist.org.uk/archive/archive_home.cfm/volumeID_17-editionID_105-ArticleID_684-getfile_getPDF/thepsychologist%5C0404ditt.pdf</p>
	<p>Robin Banerjee Professor of Developmental Psychology, Director of CRESS (Children's Relationships, Emotions, and Social Skills) Research Lab University of Sussex</p>	<p>Children's Social and Emotional Well-Being, Development of Self and Values, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)</p>	<p>http://www.sussex.ac.uk/psychology/cress/ http://sealcommunity.org/node/265</p>

Event Programme

- 15:30-16:00 Arrival and Registration in the Jubilee Building
- 16:00-16:10 Welcome
Prof. Pete Clifton, Head of School of Psychology
Prof. Rupert Brown, Director of Research & Knowledge Exchange, School of Psychology
- 16:10-16:40 Research Synopsis: Helga Dittmar & Robin Banerjee
A consumerist orientation appears to ...
.. be linked to lower well-being over time
.. undermine children's learning and exam grades
.. be related to a less environmentally-friendly outlook
- 16:40-17.00 Generating Questions to Feed into Panel Discussion
- 17:00-18.45 Panel Discussion (with multi-disciplinary experts)
- 18:45- 19:30 Networking, Reception, & Brighton Band 'Botticellis'



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Women accappella band,
www.botticellis.co.uk

